The Malnourishment of Bell Gardens, California

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LIM 537: Legal, Ethical, and Strategic Fundamentals for Managers

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Community Description

Demographic Data

Bell Gardens is a small city located within the Los Angeles County area. It is near East Los Angeles city and sits next to Downey which is a more well-known area. The city is located next to the 710 freeway and is most well known for The Bicycle Hotel & Casino. With a population of 40,000 people, 96.2% are Hispanic/Latino and 41% are foreign born, and 26.6% live in poverty (US Census Bureau). Among the population of the community, 49% are female and 30% are minors (US Census Bureau). The primary languages spoken among the community are Spanish and English.

The median household income is $45,289 and each household holds an average of 4.3 humans (US Census Bureau). Moreover, 78% of families in the city are renters with the median age being 29.5 (US Census Bureau). On the technology side of things, 90% of households in Bell Gardens have a computer and 81% have an internet subscription (US Census Bureau). Though households are struggling financially, most families reveal to be resourceful with continuous internet connection and ownership of smart devices.

The city of Bell Gardens surprisingly has 17 schools which represent Montebello Unified School District. The dominating schools within the area are Bell Gardens Elementary School with 965 students, Cesar E Chavez Elementary School with 916 students, Suva Elementary School with 885 students, Garfield Elementary School with 667 students, Suva Intermediate School with 808 students, Bell Gardens Intermediate School with 1,155 students, and Bell Gardens High School with 2,628 students along with a couple adult schools (Great Schools). In other words, parents have a choice in choosing their child's education but when the teenage years are reached, there are not many options. Moreover, 50% of the Bell Gardens community have a

high school diploma and only 6% have a Bachelor's (US Census Bureau). This can be seen as an issue because much of the city is solely dependent on a high school.

Economic & Business Data

As of 2019, people of Bell Gardens work in a variety of industries: production, material moving, transportation, office and administrative support, sales, food service, maintenance, healthcare support, construction, education/library, and management areas (Data USA). The median household income within the area ranges between 28.9k to 50+k (Data USA). This is interesting considering one of the greatest supporters for Bell Gardens is The Bicycle Hotel & Casino. Casinos can be a sign of temptation for one to spend a great amount of earnings which can soon lead to the risk of poverty (which is an issue Bell Gardens deals with).

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, over $14 million was provided just from table games and poker tournaments within the Bicycle Hotel & Casino (sliderplayer.com). The Department of Motor Vehicles sits within the city and gains business from the city and surrounding areas; the DMV provided nearly $5 million to the city. Other areas provided the city with finances as well: property leases over $4 million, sales and use tax $3 million, and property taxes over $1 million (slideplayer.com). A popular restaurant located near the Bicycle Hotel & Casino is El Pescador which serves Mexican food, specifically fish-related entrees. In all, Bell Gardens received almost $32 million which was an increase of $2 million from the previous fiscal year.

Political Information

The city of Bell Gardens has capital improvement projects every fiscal year; the 2019-2020 Work Plan totals almost $10 million to assist community parks, traffic zones and intersections, highway safety, rehab centers, bus shelter, and aquatic center (slideplayer.com). The city plans to run maintenance throughout its areas to meet community needs and safety.

Unfortunately, it looks like the Bell Gardens Library is not participating in any projects and is barely functioning to keep doors open for the public; the library functions as a branch of Los Angeles Public Library.

Major Community Issues

Bell Gardens is currently suffering from increasing crime rates and constant poverty. The city scores 29 out of 100 as the safest US city in 2021 (bestplaces.net). Before the pandemic, crime occurred on a minimal basis but now it is slowly increasing. In July and August 2021, just over 50 incidents were reported involving burglary, shootings, and a variety of misdemeanors (Instagram/bellgardenspolice). Because the city is relatively small, many community members are a witness to such crimes and speak about the incidents with their neighbors when outside getting the mail, walking their dog(s), or watering the grass. Many neighbors have active cameras and perform safety measures such as warning their neighbors by phone or quickly knocking on neighbors doors about suspicious activity. When neighbors are alerted, they come together with the urgency of needing to protect their property as a village. Moreover, it is applauded that the city and local police department post updates of crime incidents on their social media accounts such as Instagram.

On another note, poverty is a growing issue; there is an increase on homelessness and families putting food on the table. In 2019, 28.3% of people were in poverty and in 20201, it went down to 26.6% (US Census Bureau). Poverty remains at a steady constant and 13% of Bell Gardens is unemployed (Data USA). Currently, free meals are provided at the Neighborhood Youth Center and other select locations but these are not clearly stated to the public by the city. In addition, free meals are provided on limited hours and to those who meet requirements.

Library

Bell Gardens Library serves as a branch under the Los Angeles Public Library with eight employees and does not have their own friends of the library group. Their mission is "to provide free and easy access to information, ideas, books and technology that enrich, educate and empower every individual in our city's diverse communities" (lapl.org). The small public library praises itself for its childrens space, teens space, and book drop (lacountylibrary.org). Special services are provided for children and teens as well as online and inside the building. Equipment provided are 4 public computers, 1 child's computer, and 8 laptop/hotspot kit areas. The facilities collection size contains almost 22,000 of materials (lacountylibrary.org). The library primarily serves minors and helps them launch their education forward.

Some unique programs the Bell Gardens Library offers are citizenship, earn your high school diploma, and work ready: borrow a laptop & learn job skills. Moreover, the library provides collections in both English and Spanish languages that can be accessed online and within the facility (lacountylibrary.org). The facility does their best in helping community members thrive for a better future by working closely with the city of Bell Gardens and Montebello Unified School District (lacountylibrary.org). All in all, the library can do better in helping the community by providing a range of information regarding local resources and exploring their own curiosities.

Stakeholders

Such stakeholders to the Bell Gardens Public library are users, potential users, volunteers, and Librarians/staff. Library users and potential users are low power and low interest because they have no say in what the library should have and need the resources the library provides for them. Volunteers have low power and high interest, yet don't have the power to make changes

among the library but can continue to work to do their part for the community. Librarians/staff have high power and high interest because they can make changes and do this for the sake of their role within the facility. Moreover, Bell Gardens Library seems to not have a variety of stakeholders which brings in the conflicts of gaining more patron traffic and much needed resources.

Strategic Plans

The city of Bell Gardens plans consist of 7 elements: land use, circulation and transportation, open space and recreation, conservation, safety, noise and housing (bellgardens.org). Bell Gardens is fortunate to benefit from funds and provide continuous maintenance to high volume areas within the city. Though members of the communities depend on these areas, prevention can be done to help the community progress in an aspect that leads to a variety of success.

Bell Gardens Library follows the strategic plans of Los Angeles Public Library which is: cultivate and inspire young readers, nurture student success, champion literacy and lifelong learning, contribute to L.A.'s economic growth, stimulate the imagination, strengthen community connections and celebrate L.A. (lapl.org). Bell Gardens Library doesn't have much of a budget to perform many needs for the community, but they stick to strategic plans by focusing on children and teens. Though more can be done to assist the library, the facility is doing all they can to help the community through education and success.

A Look into The Future

The city of Bell Gardens and Bell Gardens Library have a great amount of potential to positively impact their community. People within the city need to be made aware of opportunity resources to make use and fulfill their needs towards success. Three major trends to promote this potential are literacy education, local marketing, and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Each of these trends will bring the city, library, and community together.

Literacy education is the expansion of reading and writing skills; anyone can participate in this to expand their minds further. Within the city of Bell Gardens, 50% of the population have a high school diploma and 6% have earned a Bachelor's degree. A cause for this can be the multiple choices of elementary schools that welcome hundreds of students and a single high school option that enrolls well over two thousand students. The schools within Bell Gardens are setting the youth up for failure. Moreover, 41% of the population are foreign born meaning English is not the first language learned. With literacy education, the youth and those of any age can not only improve their English speaking, but reading skills and written communication. With the library partnering with the high school, offering weekly services, and hosting sessions at city events, citizens of all ages within the community can widen their knowledge. The library will be more involved with all age groups and the city will have better educational demographics. With literacy demographics, the search for accessible materials will be followed.

Local marketing is the targeting of consumers within a certain radius, in this case, the consumers will only be those living in Bell Gardens. The city performs marketing by the use of two banners portraying the same event/announcement that occurs on a yearly basis and through social media such as Instagram. Both forms do not deliver the daily to weekly information and do not reach all community members. The Bell Gardens Library does not have their own

Instagram and only a banner on their storefront hangs calling whomever passes if any attention is given. Both the city and library must perform local marketing tactics by the use of email, residential mail, posters/flyers, social media tags and hashtags, etc. Reaching out directly to community members will guarantee awareness and allow people to be aware of the resources among their city. This will ensure unity within the city and portray the library as a facility that welcomes all.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion is the representation and participation of all groups of people ranging from all backgrounds. The Bell Gardens population is 96.2% Hispanic/Latino, 26.6% are in poverty, 49% are female, and 30% are minors. The city has potential in representing a variety of individuals through equal treatment. This is a great opportunity for people to become more open-minded and realize there are more than one race, background, disability, age, and other representations within Bell Gardens. Both the city and library should host events and services that call out to more than one particular group. Doing this will allow the city and library to better cater to the variety of groups representing Bell Gardens.

The strategic plans of Bell Gardens Library are: cultivate and inspire young readers, nurture student success, champion literacy and lifelong learning, contribute to L.A.'s economic growth, stimulate the imagination, strengthen community connections and celebrate L.A. Trends in literacy education and diversity, equity, and inclusion greatly support the strategic plan and will benefit the library. The city of Bell Gardens shows the need for literacy education in all age groups. Weekly services for children, teens, and adults should be conducted to help them read and write; a class to speak and better learn English should be provided as well. This will allow community members to establish concrete communication with others, confidence to expand their education, and curiosity to perform research. This will drive patron traffic within the library

and potentially increase the educational demographics within the city. Expanded learning among the community will welcome open-mindedness, friendly challenges, and an empowering neighborhood.

Local marketing is a trend that does not address the strategic plan but will greatly benefit Bell Gardens Library. Besides emailing and sending mail to recorded patrons and residences with permission, the library must have its own social media account. Having an independent social media account will allow the library to use hashtags and collaborate with other accounts (such as Bell Gardens High School and the city of Bell Gardens) to recruit and welcome patron traffic. The more traffic Bell Gardens brings the more the facility can better serve the community. Moreover, the library does not have their own Friends of the Library group and marketing to the city will potentially welcome volunteers to help the library make finances from used and donated materials. Bell Gardens Library needs to do their own individual marketing among the city to bring in patron traffic, serve the needs of the community, and gain volunteers. A greater patron audience within the city will tell the library they are a needed resource.

High School Shooting Erupts Causing Closures

On Thursday, a shooting erupted at Bell Gardens High School during the hour of lunch. Two students were pronounced dead at the scene while four others were rushed to the hospital with unknown injuries. It is said that two groups of students, gang affiliated, got into an argument and one student pulled out a gun. Since the incident, several students and family members are scared and afraid to report to school.

With the increase of crime among Bell Gardens, the community is demanding answers and solutions to make the city safe for their children to attend school. Hours after the incident, it was recorded that some students depend on school meals to meet their daily nutrition, but with the horrific incident, students would rather starve and not meet their educational goals.

Bell Gardens is a small city with only one public high school; half of the city's population has a high school diploma and only 6% have a Bachelor's degree. With the youth at risk of leading in potential poverty, it is crucial that the city finds a way to feed and provide learning to students before the demographics worsen.

Early Friday, the Bell Gardens Library announced an open door policy for students of all ages, including parents. The library will open their doors and promote themselves as a safe space during these frightful times. In this advertised space, the library will have an open food pantry stocked daily and provide meal kits to those in need. The library welcomes teachers, tutors, and counselors to teach, and assist students. During this time, the library also encourages all members of the community to check out books to promote the power of knowledge. Bell Gardens Library wishes to unite the community together.

As of Sunday afternoon, the library has seen an increase in patron traffic and resource use. Students of all ages, including parents, have gone to sign up for library cards, check out

books, have a meal, attend educational sessions, and speak out their worries. Moreover, the city of Bell Gardens has decided to increase the library's funds to continue being a crucial resource to the people of the community.

Writing My Future Case Scenario

Thinking of a creative yet realistic scenario, all I could think about was a crime-related situation occurring at the high school. This is because Bell Gardens High School has close to 3,000 students, is a resource to daily nutrition, located near the library, and only half are expected to graduate with their diploma. With this information, I was debating between gun violence or theft; I decided a gang-related incident would be frighteningly creative yet realistic considering there are groups of people causing trouble within the area.

I decided to write my scenario as a news/media piece so it can be straight to the point and exciting. The piece begins immediately with the situation that occurs, explains in detail how the people have been affected, provides a solution, and ends on community unity. Because the community spreads the word of crime occurrences quickly, I felt it was right to make everyone feel concerned about the situation. This is a life-changing crime and quick acts must be done to prevent future occurrences like this.

I feel the library can do its part by opening its doors to the community and serve as a safe space. This will allow students and adults to grow in strength to take back their education and not let crime or poverty defeat them. A food pantry is a doable resource the library can provide to help feed the community and providing meal kits can help reduce poverty. I am not sure if school staff will be comfortable in moving their work to the library but I felt this will be most inviting and encourage the public to enter the library and spend a few hours. Lastly, the library should promote their resources; with high patron traffic it is critical to gain traffic on the checking out of

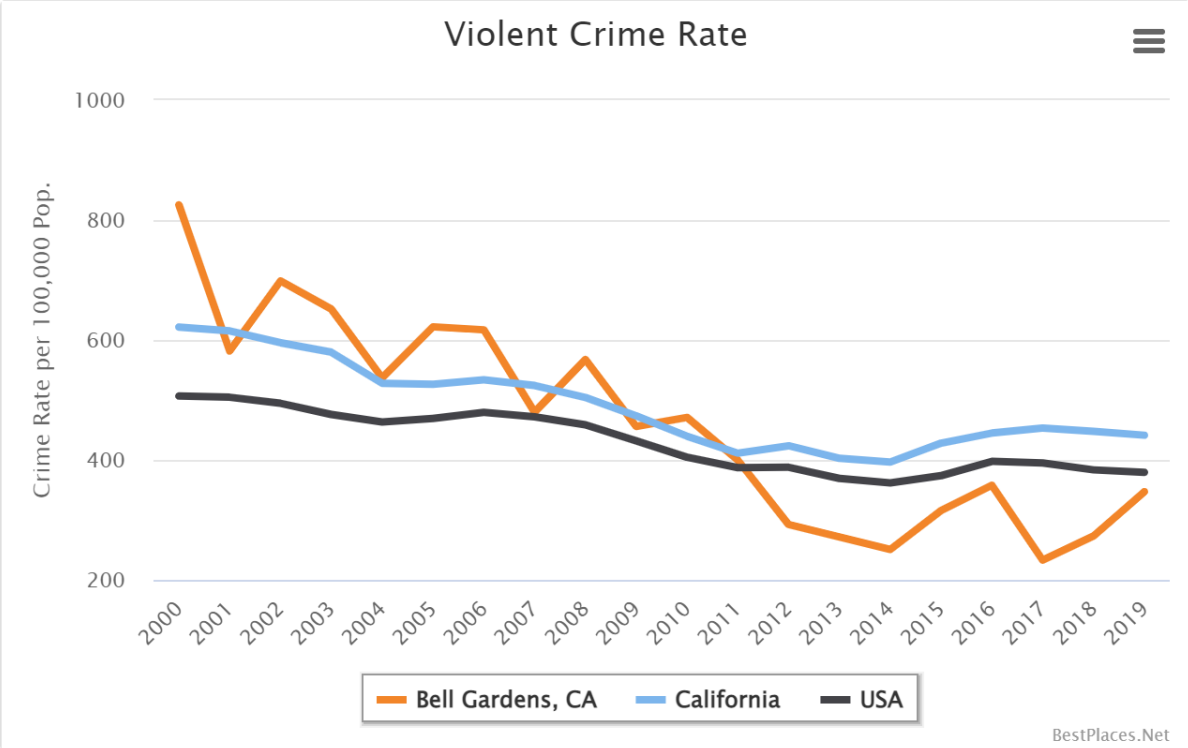
resources. This will encourage the literacy of the city to grow and all services the library offers can be advertised to better the community. I added more funds for the library as an act of unity by the city but I am unsure if this is possible. All in all, I feel this scenario allowed me to promote the library and bring light to them on how they can serve the community to better demographics.

Appendix

The Bicycle Hotel & Casino

DMV
DRIVE TEST
VEHICLE
VERIFICATION

Bell Gardens Police Department August 2021	JUL	AUG	% Change	YTD 2020	YTD 2021	% Change
Part One Crimes	53	52	-2%	483	504	+4%
Homicide	2	0	-100%	2	2	+0%
Rapes & Attempt Rapes	0	0	+0%	7	3	-57%
Robbery	5	3	-40%	44	26	-41%
Aggravated Assault	11	10	-9%	53	64	+21%
Residential Burglary	2	1	-50%	16	10	-38%
Commercial Burglary	2	4	+100%	35	36	+3%
Larceny	3	9	+200%	63	58	-8%
Vehicle Burglary	9	11	+22%	119	120	+1%
Motor Vehicle Theft	18	13	-28%	139	176	+27%
Arson	1	1	+0%	5	9	+80%
Arrests						
Felony	53	28	-47%	177	293	+66%
Juvenile	5	1	-80%	30	27	-10%



No.	Project	Amount	Funding Source(s)
1	Ford Park Infiltration Cistern	$48,000	General Fund (Match)
2	Veterans Park City Yard Compliance Upgrade	350,000	Measure W
3	Florence Ave at Ira Jaboneria Intersection Improvements	1,272,000	Grants, Measure R
4	Intersection improvements Garfield and Eastern	4,635,000	Grants
5	Slurry Zone 1 Improvements Phase 2	200,000	Gas Tax
6	Traffic Studies	75,000	Measure R & M
7	Street Rehab Projects Phase 2	529,000	Measure M & TDA
8	Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Lubec/Eastern; Loveland/Garfield	115,000	Prop C &TDA
9	Gage Ave Rehab Phase 2	150,000	Prop C
10	Circulation Element Plan/TOD	214,000	Grants & TDA
11	Traffic Signal Garfield & Muller	425,000	Gas Tax, Prop C
12	Bus Shelter Replacement Program	150,000	AQMD
13	Ford Park Aquatic Center	708,000	CDBG (Annual Allocation)
14	Garfield Street Rehab (Eastern-Quinn)	1,000,000	Measure R & STPL ($1 million pending approval)
	Total FY 2019-20 CIP	**$9,871,000**	

Revenue Source	FY 18-19 Adopted	FY 19-20 Proposed	Increase/ (Decrease)
Bicycle Casino	$13,000,000	14,280,000	1,280,000
In Lieu Motor Vehicle	4,465,000	4,763,000	298,000
Property Leases	4,061,000	4,393,000	332,000
Sales & Use Tax	3,071,000	3,006,000	(65,000)
Property Taxes	1,269,000	1,374,000	105,000
Transfers-In	468,000	501,000	33,000
Charges for Services	975,000	957,000	(18,000)
Franchise Fees	753,000	801,000	48,000
Hotel Visitor Tax	750,000	745,000	(5,000)
Fines and Forfeitures	464,000	459,000	5,000
Interest Income	80,000	230,000	150,000
Other Revenues	258,000	247,000	(11,000)
Total Revenue	**$29,614,000**	**31,756,000**	**2,142,000**

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